



### **Free and Reduced-Price Meals Policy**

The Board of Directors of Connecting Waters Charter Schools (“CWCS” or “Charter School”), a California nonprofit public benefit corporation operating public charter schools, recognizes that adequate nutrition is essential to the development, health, and learning of all students. The Executive Director or designee shall facilitate and encourage the participation of students from low-income families in the Charter School’s food service program.

Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, each CWCS school site shall provide at least one nutritionally adequate meal (breakfast or lunch) each school day, free of charge or at a reduced price, for students whose families meet federal eligibility criteria. CWCS shall provide this meal for any eligible student on any school day that the student is scheduled for educational activities, as defined in Education Code Section 49010, lasting two or more hours, at a school site, resource center, meeting space, or other satellite facility operated by CWCS.

### **Free and Reduced-Price Meals Application and Notification**

The Executive Director or designee shall ensure that the application form for free and reduced-price meals and related materials include the following statements:

1. Applications for free and reduced-price meals may be submitted at any time during a school day.
2. Children receiving free or reduced priced meals will not be overtly identified by the use of special tokens, special tickets, special serving lines, separate entrances, separate dining areas, or by any other means.

The application packet shall include the following notifications and information using simple and culturally appropriate language:

1. A notification that if a child qualifies for free school meals, then the child may qualify for free or reduced-cost health coverage.
2. A request for the applicant’s consent for the child to participate in the Medi-Cal program, if eligible for free school meals, and to have the information on the school meal application shared with the entity designated by the State Department of Health Care Services to make an accelerated determination and the local agency that determines eligibility under the Medi-Cal program.
3. A notification that the Charter School will not forward the school meal application to the

entity designated by the State Department of Health Care Services to make an accelerated determination and the local agency that determines eligibility under the Medi-Cal program, without the consent of the child's parent or guardian.

4. A notification that the school meal application is confidential and, with the exception of forwarding the information for use in health program enrollment upon the consent of the child's parent or guardian, the Charter School will not share the information with any other governmental agency, including the federal Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration.
5. A notification that the school meal application information will only be used by the entity designated by the State Department of Health Care Services to make an accelerated determination and the state and local agencies that administer the Medi-Cal program for purposes directly related to the administration of the Medi-Cal program and will not be shared with other governmental agencies, including the federal Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration for any purpose other than the administration of the Medi-Cal program.
6. Information regarding the Medi-Cal program, including available services, program requirements, rights and responsibilities, and privacy and confidentiality requirements.

If CWCS elects to post its free and reduced-price meals application online, it will include the following:

1. Require completion of only those questions necessary for determining eligibility.
2. Include clear instructions for families that are homeless or migrant.
3. Include a link to the Internet Web site on which translated applications are posted by the United States Department of Agriculture, with instructions in that language that inform the applicant how to submit the application.
4. Comply with the privacy rights and disclosure protections.
5. Include links to all of the following:
  - (i) The online application to CalFresh.
  - (ii) The online single state application for health care.
  - (iii) The Internet Web page maintained by the State Department of Public Health entitled "About WIC and How to Apply," or another Internet Web page identified by the State Department of Public Health that connects families to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children.
  - (iv) The Internet Web site of a summer lunch program authorized to participate within the city or school district.

Eligibility and ongoing eligibility shall be determined for the free and reduced-price meal program based on the criteria made available by the California Department of Education.

It is the policy of the Board that non-paying students shall not be shamed, treated differently, or served a meal that differs from the meal of a paying student. This Policy prohibits the Charter School from disciplining a pupil which would result in the denial or delay of a nutritionally adequate meal to that pupil.

CWCS shall notify a parent/guardian of the negative balance of a pupil's school meal account no later than ten (10) days after the account has reached a negative balance. Before sending this notification to the parent/guardian, CWCS must exhaust all options and methods to directly certify the pupil for free or reduced-price meals. In the event that CWCS determines that a student who has accrued a negative balance would have been eligible for free or reduced-price school meals, the Charter School shall credit such balance in accordance with this Policy. CWCS shall reimburse school meal fees paid by a pupil's parent/guardian in the event that the pupil is subsequently determined to have qualified for free or reduced-price meals. In the event that CWCS is not able to directly certify the pupil, CWCS shall provide the parent or guardian with a paper copy of, or an electronic link to, an application with the notification and contact the parent or guardian to encourage application submission.

### **Confidentiality/Release of Records**

All applications and records related to eligibility for the free and reduced-price meal program shall be confidential and may not be released except as provided by law and authorized by the Board or pursuant to a court order.

The Board authorizes designated employees to use individual records pertaining to student eligibility for the free and reduced-price meal program for the following purposes:

1. Disaggregation of academic achievement data
2. Identification of students eligible for alternative supports in any school identified as a Title 1 program improvement school

If a student transfers from the Charter School to another charter school, district, county office of education program, or private school, the Executive Director or designee may share the student's meal eligibility information to the other educational agency to assist in the continuation of the student's meal benefits.

The Executive Director or designee may release the name and eligibility status of a student participating in the free or reduced-price meal program to another charter school, school district, or county office of education that is serving a student living in the same household as an enrolled pupil for purposes related to program eligibility and data used in local control

funding formula calculations.

The Executive Director or designee may release the name and eligibility status of a student participating in the free or reduced-price meal program to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for purposes of determining funding allocations under the local control funding formula and for assessing accountability of that funding.

The Executive Director or designee may release information on the school meal program application to the local agency that determines eligibility for participation in the Medi-Cal program if the student has been approved for free meals and if the applicant consents to the sharing of this information.

The Executive Director or designee may also release information on the school meal application to the local agency that determines eligibility for CalFresh or to an agency that determines eligibility for nutrition assistance programs if the student has been approved for free or reduced-price meals and if the applicant consents to the sharing of this information.

This information released shall adhere to the following requirements:

1. Individual indicators of participation in a free or reduced-price meal program shall not be maintained in the permanent record of any pupil, unless otherwise authorized by law.
2. The public release of information regarding individual pupil participation in a free or reduced-price meal program is not permitted.
3. All other confidentiality requirements imposed by law or regulation are met.